DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 466 EC 161 803

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TITLE Developing Your Gifted Program Manual: A Guide for Coordinators. #6 of a Series.
INSTITUTION Illinois Council for the Gifted, Bolingbrook.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Philosophy; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; *Program Development; *Program Guides; Referral; Staff Development; Talent Identification

ABSTRACT

Educational policies for gifted programs are often developed as the result of being under fire by either the public, parents, or the district. Such policies are often ill-conceived because they have been created under pressure rather than rational thought; therefore, this booklet reviews the content and organization of a sample program manual for gifted education. Three major aspects of the program manual are addressed: (1) district organizational materials (district philosophy and definition, program goals, and program description); (2) district policies (referral procedures, withdrawal procedures, student records, and staff development); and (3) monitoring materials (program objectives, current proposal, miscellaneous program forms, coordinator documentation, media coverage, needs assessment, and parents advisory council). Examples of specific manual materials that may be modified to fit a district's specific needs are provided for each aspect. The booklet concludes with a discussion of writing, reviewing, and distributing the manual. (CL)

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DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTED PROGRAM MANUAL

A GUIDE FOR COORDINATORS

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EC 160108

6 of a series

Written by

Trevor T. Steinbach

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DEVELOPING YOUR PROGRAM MANUAL

Unfortunately, we in Gifted Education are not known for futuristic planning of programs. This lack of planning is related to the survival mentality of gifted. Many other educational programs in the average district have policies which are clear cut, well thought out, and developed to handle as many contingencies as possible. We in gifted have, for the most part, piecemeal policies not gathered in any location. In addition to this policy problem, we are often forced to create policies as a result of being under fire by either the public, parents, or the district. Often, these policies are ill-conceived, but we then multiply our mistakes for years to come by depending on policies adopted under the gun. The time to develop a program manual is not under fire, but when well conceived policies under rational thought are possible.

What I will now describe is such a program book, with its various components. Specific examples of policies will be presented as working documents. These documents should be considered only as examples, and should be modified to fit your own district's specific needs

Organization of a Program Manual

There are three major sections in the program manual I will be elaborating upon. These sections are: (1) District Organizational Materials, (2) District Policies, and (3) Monitoring Materials. Each of these three areas would be involved in a State Board of Education on-site visitation.

The first area is the District Organizational Materials. This section focuses more on philosophy and implementation of the program than in the area of day to day workings of an articulated program.

I. District Organizational Materials

A. District Philosophy and Definition
B. Program Goals
C. Program Description

The second area are the District Policies. This section focuses on the policies which effect the students and staff.

II. District Policies

A. Referral Procedures
B. Withdrawal Procedures
C. Student Records
D. Staff Development

The final area is the Monitoring Materials section. This part of the Program Manual focuses on the materials needed for an on-site visitation by the State Board.

III. Monitoring Materials

A. Objectives of the Program
B. Current Proposal
C. Miscellaneous Program Forms
D. Coordinator Documentation
E. Media Coverage
F. Needs Assessment
G. Parents Advisory Council

Specific Program Manual Examples

On the following pages are examples of specific components of the Program Manual.

I. DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONAL MATERIALS

A. District Philosophy: Gifted children are present in all levels of society, within all racial and ethnic groups, and they come from all kinds of homes.

District _____ is committed to the principle that all gifted children should receive continuous articulated services appropriate to their needs throughout their elementary and secondary education. Therefore, District _____ has developed a program which:

1. Identifies gifted students.
2. Provides a program of experiences which are substantially different from the regular educational program. This program is based upon the unique needs of the gifted student.

B. District _____ Definition of General Intellectual Abilitiy: The child possessing general intellectual ability is superior to that of other children in the school to the extent that he needs and can profit from specially planned educational services beyond those normally provided by the standard school program.

C. Program Goals
1. The program will promote mastery and enrichment of curriculum content through a greater depth of understanding and the stimulation of independent thinking skills.
2. The program will promote student acceptance of constructive criticism, openness to new ideas, and respect of others' rights, especially the right to be different.
3. The program will promote research skills, which will be developed and refined as students are introduced to a variety of sources.

4. The program will promote individual initiative in independent study and research. Students will be encouraged to pursue their particular interests as they are introduced to new possibilities for inquiry and investigation.
5. The program will promote the student's ability to speak effectively, to engage in productive discussion, and to express himself/herself in writing.

GOALS
1982-1983

1. Implement fifth, sixth, eighth, tenth and eleventh grade program.
2. Review third and fourth grade program.
3. Provide educational inservices for new program staff.
4. Provide educational sessions for new and previous program parents.
5. Provide inservice to classroom teachers to assist gifted students.
6. To develop a mentor file of businesses and community groups to work with East students.
7. To articulate with Chamber of Commerce and other groups (Kiwanis) in regards to mentorships.
8. To develop a scheduling system to enable credit and mentorships to take place under an educational umbrella.
9. To review seventh, ninth and twelfth grade programs.

GOALS
1983-1984

1. To articulate all previous students into a continuous program.
2. Provide educational inservices for new program staff.

3. To provide educational sessions for new parents and parents presently in the program.
4. To provide inservice for classroom teachers to assist gifted students.
5. To implement the mentor based High School Gifted Program.
6. To evaluate all grade levels and begin three year cycle of curriculum review of program. 1985 elementary, 1986 junior high, 1987 high school.

D. Program Description

1. Elementary Program Description - FY82: The current elementary program is a pull-out program for two hours per week. The staff is taken directly from the child's school. This enables the Gifted Resource Person (GRP) to work with the student outside of the two hour span of the formal program. Most GRP's meet in the elementary building's library for resource utilization within the current program's curriculum.

   The program begins the end of September and lasts until the beginning of June. Thirty weeks are utilized for direct contact with students, and four weeks are used as planning time and final evaluation time.

   The large mobile population of District _____ mandates the program's beginning in late September rather than at the beginning of the school term. Planning time is built in prior to and immediately following the sessions to enable the teacher to conduct student/teacher conferences and prepare materials prior to the class.

2. Secondary Program Description- FY82: The current District _____ Gifted Program for the secondary level consists of two course offerings in the FY83 school year.

Math: At the seventh grade level, a pre-algebra course designed specifically for gifted math students. With the addition of computers at both junior high schools, an introduction to the computer is also integrated into the course.

Humanities: At the twelfth grade level, this two semester course is designed specifically for college bound gifted students. Taught on a team teaching system through the Social Studies and English Departments, the course focuses on art, music, history and literature from ancient to modern times.

PROGRAM UNIT SCHEDULE - FY82

September 18-October 2) November 2-November 6)	First unit Six weeks
November 9-November 13	Planning week
November 16-November 20) January 18-January 22)	Second unit Eight weeks
January 25-January 29	Planning week
February 1-February 5) March 22-March 26)	Third unit Eight weeks
March 29-April 2	Planning week
April 5-April 6) May 31-June 2)	Fourth unit Eight weeks
June 7-June 11	Program Evaluation

30 weeks of instruction
2 hours per week
60 hours for the year.

II. DISTRICT POLICIES

A. Referral Procedures-Procedures for Annual Screening and Placement of Gifted Students: All students are screened for gifted potential by District _____ every spring. The first step in this screening is the administration of the California Achievement Test (CAT) as a district. Scores of all students are studied for both high verbal and comprehension abilities. Student I.Q. scores are also noted, especially in the 120+ range on the SFTAA. Candidates are chosen from the pool of students that have at least a 120+ I.Q. and have reading scores on the CAT of at least 1½ grade levels above their current level. All students chosen through test scores will also require teacher recommendations, utilizing the district modified Renzulli test. Students may also be nominated (in exceptional cases) using teacher and/or parent recommendations to initiate the selection process.

All nominated students will then ahve their total scores ranked. Five percent of the total district population will be computed for each grade level. This five percent will be the number selected for admission to the program. The remaining nominated students will comprise the auxiliary list of students. As current students leave District _____ schools, the auxiliary list will be used to maintain the district's five percent level.

B. Identification Procedures
   1. I.Q. Test: Take the top five percent of scores at a grade level. Ranges are established within the top five percent and points are assigned for each range.
   2. CAT Vocabulary Comprehension: Take the top five percent of scores at a grade level. Ranges are established within the top five percent and points are assigned for each range.

3. Teacher Checklist: A checklist filled out by teachers for the children who are eligible after review of test data. Each positive check means a point. Count total points for each checklist for each child.

Final selection will be made by rank order of the students at a given grade level. The top five percent of the total grade level will be selected.

Example: If the third grade has 100 students, five would be selected as gifted. Twenty-five children at that grade level become an auxiliary list.

GIFTED PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION MATRIX
FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS (1-6)

Student _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Birthdate _____ Age _____ Grade _____ Sex _____

	SCORE	POINTS
SFTAA/TOGA	_____	_____
CAT Vocabulary	_____	_____
CAT Comprehension	_____	_____
District Teacher Checklist	_____	_____
Total Points		_____
Rank in Class List		_____

Date

Mr. and Mrs. John Doe
1234 Any Street
Anytown, Anystate 12345

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Doe:

District _____ provides many educational opportunities for its student population. Your child, John Jr., has been identified as a gifted student (high ability/high I.Q.). District _____ would like to provide John Jr. with a special program in his school for two hours a week. A teacher who has been specially trained by the district will provide the special instruction in your child's school. This program consists of materials made to stimulate your child's language arts, study skills, and creative thinking abilities.

We feel that through this special program we can assist your gifted child to reach his greatest potential. However, before we can provide this special service, we must have your written permission. If you would like your child to participate, please sign the enclosed form and return it to your child's building principal or classroom teacher by (date).

If you have any questions regarding the program or the permission form, please call me.

Sincerely,

Gifted Coordinator

GC/amc

Enclosure

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GIFTED STUDENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A student must give some indication of possessing the characteristics of a gifted student as listed on the Gifted Behavioral Characteristics Checklist. Students who did not qualify for the Gifted Program in the spring, or who recently entered District _____, are eligible for nomination.

1. The classroom teacher, building principal or a parent will complete the nomination card and forward it to the Gifted Coordinator through the building principal. The child's current classroom teacher will be asked to complete the Gifted Behavioral Characteristics Checklist. Since many of the characteristics of gifted children may not be observable immediately upon the entrance of a student to a classroom, the teacher should complete the checklist after the student has attended class for one month.

2. The Gifted Coordinator will then score the checklist. If the score meets or exceeds the current district cut-off point, the Gifted Coordinator will then administer the TOGA (Test of General Ability) to the student.

3. The teacher checklist and TOGA scores will then be converted to a final point score for ranking.

4. If this composite score falls within the range of scores of gifted students currently in the program, the student will be formally invited to participate by a letter to the child's parent from the Gifted Coordinator. The parents will be asked to return their permission form to the building principal, who will forward it to the Gifted Coordinator. The student will then be scheduled into the program.

5. If the composite score falls below the range of scores of the current program population, the student's record will be kept on file with the Gifted Coordinator, along with the scores of other students at that grade level. The parent, teacher and building principal will be informed of the student's status in writing by the Gifted Coordinator. These students will be considered for future placement if an opening exists. Placement will be determined by student position in the ranked score.

Date:

To:

From: Gifted Coordinator

Subject: SPECIAL NOMINATION

As a teacher completing a special nomination card on a potential gifted student, would you please complete the attached checklist on the student. Upon completion of this checklist, please return it to your building principal, who will forward it to me.

Thank you for your cooperation.

The following is duplicated on a 4" x 6" index card.

SPECIAL GIFTED NOMINEE

NAME _____

Parent/Guardian _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Teacher _____

School _____

Date _____

I believe that the above student is a potential gifted student.

Date

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith
1234 Any Street
Anytown, Anystate 12345

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

District _____ provides many educational opportunities for the student population. Your son, William, has been recommended for the Gifted Program. We would like your permission to test your child.

If you would like William tested as a candidate for the program, would you please sign the enclosed form and return it to your son's classroom teacher or building principal by (date).

If you have any questions regarding the testing or the permission form, please call me.

Sincerely,

Gifted Coordinator

GC/amc

Enclosure

Date

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith
1234 Any Street
Anytown, Anystate 12345

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

Recently you gave us permission to test William for possible admission to the Gifted Program. As a result of this testing, we have concluded that William qualifies for placement in the Gifted Program.

This program consists of materials made to stimulate the student's language arts, study skills, and creative thinking abilities. The teacher at the school will be meeting with William every (meeting day and time).

We feel that through this special program we can assist your gifted student to reach his potential. However, before we can provide this special service, we must have your written permission. Would you please sign the enclosed form and return it to William's building principal or classroom teacher as soon as possible.

If you have any questions regarding the program, please call me.

Sincerely,

Gifted Coordinator

GC/amc

Enclosure

Date

Mr. and Mrs. John Smith
1234 Any Street
Anytown, Anystate 12345

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

You recently gave us permission to test William for possible admission to District _____ Gifted Program. Eligibility for the program is determined by test scores in language arts, I.Q. scores, and teacher recommendations. After considering the above data for William, we find that he is not eligible for entrance into the Gifted Program at this time. We will keep all the above information on file, and if positions in the program open at a later date, William will again be considered for placement.

Due to state and local requirements, there are a limited number of students selected for placement in the Gifted Program. It is a compliment to William that he has been considered.

If you have any questions, please call me.

Sincerely,

Gifted Coordinator

GC/amc

B. Withdrawal Procedures: Procedures for the withdrawal of a student from the Gifted Program are as follows:

1. The gifted teacher notifies the principal and Gifted Coordinator in writing of the student's poor performance in the program.
2. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are notified in writing and/or by phone of the student's need to improve his/her performance during the next two-week period. The Gifted Coordinator and principal are both notified of this parent contact in writing.
3. If the student's performance does not improve during the two-week period, an interdisciplinary conference consisting of the parent(s)/guardian(s), principal, gifted teacher, and Gifted Coordinator will be held.
4. At that conference, the future placement of the student will be discussed. Final programming placement will be decided for the student.

C. Student Records: Here you would list your local Board of Education's current policy on Student Records.

D. Staff Development: The District _____ Gifted Program is organized to promote staff development. Current staff development consists of a two part plan.

1. Intensive Initial Staff Development. Prior to staff members teaching in the program, they undergo a 20-hour inservice on characteristics, psycho/social development of gifted, and classroom techniques.
2. Longitudinal Staff Development. Longitudinal staff development consists of the following:
   a) Monthly Updates. The Gifted Coordinator, at least once a month, sends

informational updates on current gifted trends and research. These updates enable the staff to "keep current" with gifted education at the state and national level.

b) ASC-State Workshops. All program staff attend at least one ASC/State sponsored workshop during the school year. Information gathered is then dispersed to all other program staff members by the Gifted Coordinator.

c) Graduate Credit Coursework. Through local colleges at least once a year a gifted course for graduate credit is offered in the District _____ area. This enables program teachers to meet the minimum state requirements in graduate credit at present and obtain credit toward future state certification.

d) District Inservice. To promote awareness by staff not involved in the program, both the Gifted Coordinator and consultants paid with gifted funds are utilized on district inservice programs. In addition, specific sessions are orientated toward current gifted staff needs during county-wide inservice days.

III. MONITORING MATERIALS

A. Objectives of the Program: This section of the manual contains the specific objectives for each grade level (elementary) or course (secondary) being taught under the program. These objectives are in more detail than those presented in the proposal sent to the state.

Example: The student will be able to employ the Dewey Decimal System in finding materials for the reference search.

B. Current Proposal: This part contains the current year's proposal in its entirety. This is in the Program Manual as a reference tool for checking the current status of the goals and objectives during the year.

C. Miscellaneous Program Forms: Many programs create administrative forms used to report information. An example of this is the Conference Report Form.

CONFERENCE REPORT
Gifted Department

Name _____

Meeting _____ Today's Date _____

Meeting Location _____

Meeting Date _____

Conference and Travel Form Number _____

Summation of meeting information (please attach a copy of all handouts):

D. Coordinator Documentation: Under current rules and regulations, coordinators must document their qualifications. Three types of information should appear here:

1. A transcript showing college gifted coursework.
2. Evidence of having taught gifted for two years, or a summer ASC workshop.
3. A job spec for the position of Gifted Coordinator.

The following is an example of that job spec.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Title: COORDINATOR OF GIFTED EDUCATION
Reports to: Director of Curriculum Services

A. The Coordinator of Gifted Education is directly responsible to the Director of Curriculum Services and shall consult with him on matters of administrative policy formation and execution.

B. The Coordinator of Gifted Education will be expected to furnish leadership in the area of gifted education. This includes keeping abreast of developments in the field.

C. The Coordinator of Gifted Education shall:

1. Interpret, review and update the basic philosophy, objectives and programs in the area of Gifted Education in accordance with the district educational philosophy.
2. Develop and implement procedures to enhance and promote articulation between all schools, grades K-12.
3. Design programs in the area of inservice growth and ongoing staff development.
4. Conduct regularly scheduled meetings with teachers of gifted students.
5. Participate in planning preschool workshops for the orientation of new and existing staff members.

6. Supervise the development and/or writing of curricular projects during the summer.
7. Prepare and recommend the annual budget for the Gifted Education Program.
8. Provide consultation services for all gifted teachers.
9. Analyze and evaluate the district test data for the improvement of instruction of gifted students.
10. Submit an annual report to the Director of Curriculum Services on the status of the Gifted Program.
11. Review and disseminate current periodicals and literature.
12. Perform other duties and responsibilities as designated by the Superintendent of Schools.

E. Media Coverage: This portion of the manual contains copies of all newspaper articles and parent newsletters on the Gifted Program.

F. Needs Assessment: Specific needs assessments used in program modification or extention are shown in this section, with their specific results. The following is a sample Needs Assessment.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To help determine the major programming orientation of the program, would you please fill out the following needs assessment.

A. Major needs in Program Development (please rank).

_____ K- 2
_____ 3- 4
_____ 5- 6
_____ 7- 9
_____ 10-12

B. Major needs in Curriculum Development (please rank).

_____ Language Arts
_____ Science
_____ Math
_____ Social Studies
_____ Creativity
_____ Research and Study Skills
_____ Visual and Performing Arts

C. Please rank the following in regards to inservice programs for gifted teachers.

_____ Content Areas (Math, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies)
_____ Horizontal/Vertical Enrichment
_____ Affective Side of Gifted Students
_____ Creative Problem Solving
_____ Creativity Techniques

Thank you for your cooperation

Sincerely,

Gifted Coordinator

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G. Parents Advisory Council - Gifted Program:
The Parents Advisory Council meets three times a year, in October, January, and April. Membership in this council is limited to one member from each elementary building, to be nominated by the gifted teacher and principal. The goals of the group are as follows:

1. To provide parent input into the Gifted Program.
2. To inform and educate parents on the current status of gifted education.
3. To facilitate community understanding of the Gifted Program.

District Implementation of a Program Manual

Now that you have seen some of a program manual's components, and have viewed some sample documents, the major question is, "How do I do one?" There are three major tasks in front of you as Gifted Coordinator: (1) Writing the manual, (2) reviewing the manual, and (3) distributing the manual. Each of these three tasks must be accomplished prior to the implementation of policies and concepts upon district personnel. Without each of these steps, your district will have a manual which will not be an effective instrument for decision making. Let's look at the three major steps in Program Manual Implementation.

Step I - Writing the Manual

While this pamphlet provides specific examples of policies and documents, these should be adapted to fit specific needs for your specific district. The first question you must ask yourself prior to writing material for the manual is, "Why do I need this?" Indiscriminate writing of documents and policies without necessity is not only a waste of your time, but it also sets a dangerous precedent toward maximum buracracy. The previous statement must also be tempered with the knowledge that lack of materials within the Program Manual may lead to far greater problems. A balance must be sought between a total control and a laissez-faire manual. All materials in a manual should undergo at least three readings prior to final adoption. Many manuals start as a result of other programs in a district developing them. My manual was begun because I found the Special Education Manual in District 131 a working model to base mine on. I also found that since the program was being initiated, many potential program issues would be decided this first year. As a result of this, I decided to begin the manual and fill it as policies and documents were created. I found that some Special Education policies and documents could be modified for use in the program,

rather than using totally original materials.

Step II - Reviewing the Manual

This second step is by far the most crucial of the three. Without adequate review, policies may be poorly written and result in catastrophic programming effects. Review of manual materials should be done by at least three groups: administrators, teachers, and parents. This review of the manual should preclude any potential misunderstandings of policies which might differ in intent from their original concept. Many times a policy of concept is written but the writer is incapable of seeing potential problems which other eyes might. The involvement of all three groups, especially parents, builds a power base of approval prior to release to the general public. Legitimacy is given to the concepts and the materials in the manual, which is so crucial for enforcement at later stages.

Step III - Distributing the Manual

Once adequate review of the Program Manual has been completed, the final step is the distribution. The distribution should take two forms. Complete copies of the manual should be available in both the central office of the district, and in every school building. In this manner, when the public asks a question about the program and the Coordinator is not available, both central office staff and principals will have the answers to the questions. This is especially crucial on the issue of identification with the program. When an angry community member calls, a quick, uniform answer would be forthcoming by both the principal, Coordinator, and central office staff through the use of the Program Manual. Consistency is the key for school personnel when dealing with the public, and the program manual provides that key.

The second form of distribution is through a district pamphlet on the program. This pamphlet would be

provided to all parents in the program and all potential candidates.

The content of the parent pamphlet should include the following sections of the Program Manual:

Philosophy
Program Description
Identification System
Information on Parent Advisory Council
Parenting Tips

Hopefully, upon the completion of your Program Manual, you will find that its use will enable you to explain and defend your policies now and in the future.